

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 123

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 58

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 123—Relative to the California Memorial Project Remembrance Day.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 7, 2010.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 123, Chesbro. California Memorial Project Remembrance Day.

This measure would proclaim the 3rd Monday of each September as California Memorial Project Remembrance Day in California, to honor and restore dignity to individuals who lived and died in California institutions.

WHEREAS, Since 1852 when the first California state institution opened, the state has provided services to persons with disabilities in state institutions, including state hospitals and developmental centers; and

WHEREAS, From the mid-1880s to the 1960s, more than 45,000 individuals passed away while residents of a state institution, and information about these patients is incomplete; and

WHEREAS, For the most part, the remains of the individuals who died at state institutions were placed in unmarked or numbered graves in mass sites, where numbered markers long ago disappeared and many records identifying where bodies were buried have been misplaced or destroyed; and

WHEREAS, Some of the state institutions involved include the following 14 institutes: Agnews Developmental Center, Atascadero State Hospital, Camarillo State Hospital, DeWitt State Hospital, Fairview Developmental Center, Lanterman Developmental Center, Mendocino State Hospital, Metropolitan State Hospital, Modesto State Hospital, Napa State Hospital, Patton State Hospital, Porterville Developmental Center, Sonoma Developmental Center, and Stockton State Hospital; and

WHEREAS, Gravesites of unknown individuals who have passed away while living in a state institution include, but are not limited to:

(a) The cremated remains of 2,284 individuals who died at the Modesto State Institution and Stockton Developmental Center at Park View in Manteca.

(b) The remains of many individuals who received treatment at the Metropolitan State Hospital in the early 1980s relocated to area cemeteries.

(c) Napa State Hospital, where from 1875 to 1924, inclusive, an estimated 4,368 individuals were buried. Napa State Hospital also interred residents at the St. Helena Public Cemetery, a local paupers field.

(d) Patton State Hospital, where from 1893 to 1934, inclusive, an estimated 2,024 individuals were buried.

(e) The remains of 1,418 individuals were buried in a cemetery now located in a field on the campus of the Sonoma Developmental Center; and

WHEREAS, When some state institutions closed, they sold their land and exhumed remains to county cemeteries, and the California Memorial Project has not identified all of the county cemeteries where former residents of state institutions have been interred; and

WHEREAS, The California Memorial Project is a collaboration of the California Network of Mental Health Clients, Disability Rights California, and People First California, that partners with the State Department of Mental Health and the Department of Developmental Services, to honor and restore dignity to individuals who lived and died in state institutions; and

WHEREAS, The legislation, Senate Bill 1448 (Chapter 440 of the Statutes of 2002) and Senate Bill 258 (Chapter 391 of the Statutes of 2006), authored by Senator Wesley Chesbro established the partnership between the California Memorial Project and the state to identify the location of gravesites at existing state institutions, identify the names of the patients whose remains were donated for medical research and the entity to which the remains were donated, work with the State Department of Mental Health and other state agencies to research the records of deaths and burials at cemeteries located on state institution grounds, and develop a plan for the restoration of cemeteries and gravesites of institutionalized persons; and

WHEREAS, The goals of the California Memorial Project include to restore cemeteries or graves where individuals from state institutions are buried, to preserve the history of the residents of state institutions, and to document the history of the client and consumer movement in California; and

WHEREAS, To further its mission, the California Memorial Project restores and memorializes the cemeteries at state institutions and county cemeteries, and works to place memorials at cemeteries and other sites to remember people who have died in state institutions. Two monuments have been placed so far, one erected on the California State University (CSU) Stanislaus campus, and another at the Stockton Rural Cemetery where 42 sets of remains of individuals who died in state institutions unearthed at CSU Stanislaus were reinterred. Future plans include a Napa State Hospital Memorial, a monument at the Patton State Hospital, and a boulder monument to be placed at the Ukiah Cemetery in honor of individuals who died while institutionalized at the Mendocino State Hospital; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 2003 the California Memorial Project has held a Remembrance Day to remember and honor individuals who lived and died in state institutions on the third Monday of each September, the anniversary of the signing of the legislation that established the California Memorial Project partnership with the state; and

WHEREAS, On the September 21, 2009, Remembrance Day, over 700 community members, self-advocates, family, friends, state institution survivors, and disability advocates gathered at the Parkview Cemetery in Manteca, Napa State Hospital in Napa, Metropolitan State Hospital in

Norwalk, Patton State Hospital in Patton, Hillcrest Cemetery in Porterville, Agnews Historic Cemetery in Santa Clara, Sonoma Developmental Center in Eldridge, Stockton Rural Cemetery in Stockton, and Ukiah Cemetery in Ukiah, for Remembrance Day ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, In California's recent history, numerous Californians with disabilities were institutionalized and died in state facilities. Today, however, many people with disabilities live full and productive lives in the community; and

WHEREAS, Attention to the California Memorial Project and its work to restore cemeteries, create memorials, develop oral histories, and hold Remembrance Day ceremonies to honor those individuals are critical pieces of California's history and serve as an opportunity to reflect upon the strides made in reducing the stigma of disability, including psychiatric and developmental disability, as well as promoting community awareness and education; and

WHEREAS, Efforts to restore dignity to individuals whose remains are buried in gravesites on state institution lands deserve recognition and support; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature of State of California hereby proclaims the third Monday of each September as California Memorial Project Remembrance Day; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.